Chapter III

NAGA UPRISING

Naga Hills district had already become an integral part of British India, in the beginning of the twentieth century. And in the process of political and administrative norms, the Naga people had started to realize this historical fact. But after the Second World War (1939-45), when the issue of granting India's independence came up, the political problem of future status of the Naga Hills district and other tribal areas was raised by some of the Naga leaders.¹ Independent India was to inherit all such territories which formed a part of British India except those which were earmarked for Pakistan. This was agreed to between the leaders of India's freedom movement and the British Government. But just on the eve of India's Independence some of the Naga leaders contemplated a separate political status for the Naga Hills district.² This was however, acceptable, neither to the Indian leaders nor to the British Government at that time. Thus the Naga Hills area was caught in the whirlpool of two political cross-currents. One was the separatist tendency of a few Naga leaders who wanted to have a separate independent political status for the Naga Hills area. And another one was the desire of the Indian leaders to keep the Naga Hills
district an integral part of India and to integrate and assimilate the Naga people in the mainstream of Indian political system.

The Nagas' demand for a separate status for their Hills district had originated mainly after the Second World War when negotiations were going on for granting independence to India. But the idea of according special status to the Naga Hills area had been mooted as early as 1929 when the Simon Commission of the British Government had visited Kohima. A few yet a patriotic group of the Nagas had formed an organisation in 1918, just after the First World War (1914-18) (in which many Nagas were sent to France as Labour Corps) with a view to fostering the welfare and the social aspirations of the Nagas under official patronage. This organisation, known as the Naga Club, submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in which they prayed that the British Government should try to safeguard their rights against all encroachments from the people who were more advanced than the Nagas by placing the Naga Hills district directly under British protection. The Nagas in their memorandum had expressed their apprehension of the introduction of foreign laws and customs to supercede their own customary laws and desired to be left alone in case the British thought leaving them at the mercy of the plains people.
Some opinion has concluded from this memorandum that the Nagas obviously wanted for the restoration of their Tribal Freedom that the British had taken away from the Nagas. However, it was not so when a careful study of the memorandum of the Nagas does not convey this. The Nagas had simply wished to be left alone in case the British decided to leave them at the mercy of others. The Nagas had mainly prayed for placing their Hill district under direct control protection and administration of the British. Hence at that time the main issue was not the independence of the Naga Hills District but just a demand for special status for it under British India's protection. And this was conceded to by the British Government. The Government of India Act, 1935, declared the Naga Hills district as an "Excluded Area" which meant the exclusion of that area wholly and/or partially from the purview of the Provincial Autonomy. The Governor was just given some discretionary power in respect of the "Excluded Area". Otherwise the Naga Hills district continued to be a part of Assam Province.

After the Second World War, 1945, however, the Naga leaders again started the movement for a special status for the Naga Hills district. The reason is not far to seek. In the post-war period, the Labour Party in the British Empire, headed by Lord Attlee, came to
power in Britain. Attlee's Government was in favour of granting independence to India. This very fact prompted the Naga leaders who, in February, 1946, had developed the existing Naga-Club into social and political organisation known as - Naga National Council to put forward the demand for a special status for the Naga Hills district.7

This Naga National Council had been organised primarily to enlist the active support of the British Officers for social, economic, political and cultural development of the Nagas. But this organisation soon developed into a political party and a pressure group to gain political advantage from the British rulers. This is evident from the fact that when the Cabinet Mission came to India in 1946, to prepare ground for granting independence to India, the Naga National Council submitted a 4 (four) point memorandum on 19 June, 1946, which was as follows:

I. This Naga National Council stands for the solidarity of Naga tribes including those in the unadministered areas;

II. This Council strongly protest against the grouping of Assam with Bengal;

III. The Naga Hills should be Constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam, in a free India, with
local autonomy and due safeguards for the interests of the Nagas; and

IV. The Naga tribes should have a separate electorate.

The Naga's demand for the inclusion of the Naga hills in an autonomous Assam Province in a free India at that indicates that the Nagas did not want to separate their hill district from India. Again their desire for a separate electorate also say that they had a mind to form simply a separate administrative body comprising all the Naga tribes under the Indian Union provided the local autonomy and the social, cultural, economic and religious interests of the Nagas were properly safeguarded. It is thus obvious that the Nagas in the beginning did not wish to form an independent sovereign State of their own. They just wanted some autonomy in matters of local administration. This attitude however, changed soon and in the beginning of 1947, they started clamouring for an independent status for the Naga Hills area saying that the earlier application/memorandum to the British Government was made only by certain uneducated with forced motive behind their movements by certain external force in the name of neo-colonialism in the Naga hills. Thus the Naga National Council submitted a memorandum on 20 February, 1947, to the British Government which expressed the misgiving that "a constitution drawn up
by the people who have no knowledge of the Naga hills and the people will be quite unsuitable and unacceptable to the Naga people", and that "thrown to forty crores of Indians, the one million of Nagas with their unique system of life will be wiped out of existence". The Naga National Council made an appeal to the British Government and the Government of India to set up an interim Government for the Naga people for a period of ten years at the end of which the Nagas should be free to choose the form of Government they liked. On 19 May, 1947, the Naga National Council again submitted another memorandum clarifying that the ten year interim Government might be a Government of the Naga people, by the Naga people and for the Naga people with full powers over the Legislative, Executive and Judicial matters and that the Guardian Power might maintain such force in the hills as was considered essential for its defence. It therefore, appears that the Naga leaders were bent upon having a separate State for the hill areas. Two days later, on 21 May, 1947, they again issued a statement in which they said, "the Nagas who were determined not to allow themselves to be involved in a divided and chaotic India, are prepared to declare their own independence and can only think of entering into a ten-year Treaty with an Independent Assam."
Here a question may arise as to why the Nagas wanted to have a separate State of their own. A number of reasons may be advanced. Firstly, the prolonged isolation and separation from the people of the plains had developed a separatist tendency among the Naga people. The British policy had aimed at keeping the hill people far from the freedom movement of India which was in full swing in the early thirties of this century.

Nationalism, the most prevalent political term of the last century is related to both heart and mind. It is the feeling of nationalism which unites people of different castes, creeds, religions and cultures in a Nation, a "state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt due to the Nation".12

The British deliberately managed to prevent the spread of Indian Nationalism to the Naga Hills district. The Indian freedom fighters were not allowed to visit the Naga Hills, with the result that the impact of nationalism which had spread all over the country could not be felt there.13 Hence the Nagas could not identify themselves with the hopes and aspirations of the people of Nation nor could they develop a common national outlook. This contributed very much to the growth of a separatist tendency among the Nagas.
Secondly, false propaganda and rumours about Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam had created a misunderstanding among the Nagas against the plainsmen. Rumours prevailed that both the Hindus and the Muslims of the plains bore them hatred. The Hindus hated the Nagas because they ate beef; the Muslims because they ate Pork. So the Nagas gradually came to understand that they would not be comfortable and well received in independent India. The Assamese and other plains people would occupy all the key posts in the administration of the Naga Hills district. The majority of the Nagas being illiterate would not be able to compete with the plainsmen. Hence they felt that their salvation lay in keeping aloof of an independent India.

Thirdly, the British and American Christian Missionaries who were active in the Naga Hills also turned the minds of the Nagas against the other people of India. They circulated wild stories about the rigidity of the orthodox caste Hindus who were to dominate the political scene of independent India. This created a sense of insecurity in the minds of the Nagas. Some of the British officials serving in the Naga Hills district also induced the Nagas to maintain their separate political identity. Adams, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills district in one of his talks to the Nagas on November 26, 1946,
stressed the importance of the unity. He said that if they remained united, they would make a Nation.

Lastly, the separatist tendency among the Nagas also grew because they had little contact with the plains. When the British administration gradually went across the Naga Hills, the only Indian that went with the British Officer was the 'Sepoy' in uniform or the camp follower of the British ruler. Both of them were looked upon by the Nagas as the legitimate target of attack on whom vengeance must be wrecked. The British official did not care at all to remove the misunderstanding between the two people. They were only interested in the maintenance of peace and order in the hills.

These were the facts which contributed very much to the growth of a separatist tendency among the Nagas and which induced them to start a vigorous campaign to secure an independent status for the Nagas. But while on the one hand the Nagas were demanding separation from India, the Indian leaders as well as the British Government were trying to impress upon them the futility of such a demand.

Nehru's Assurance to the Nagas

As early as August 1946, Nehru, the then President of the Indian National Congress, wrote a long letter to
Mr. Sakhrie, the Secretary of the Naga National Council, with a view to removing the doubts and suspicions of some Naga leaders about the status and future of the Naga Hills district in free India. In his letter Nehru tried to impress upon Sakhrie the utility of the Naga Hills district remaining a part of India.

It is obvious that the Naga territory of Eastern Assam is much too small to stand by itself politically or economically. It lies between two huge countries, India and China, and a part of it consists of rather backward people who require considerable help when India is independent ... it will not be possible for the British Government to hold on the Naga territory or any part of it. They would be isolated there between India and China. Inevitably therefore, the Naga territory must form a part of India and Assam with which it has developed such close associations. At the same time it is our policy that tribal should have as much freedom and autonomy as possible so that they can live according to their own customs and desires. Thus the solution would be that the Naga territory should be an integral part of Assam Province and yet should have a certain measure of autonomy for its own purposes. Further Nehru assured Sakhrie of the Nagas' representation in the Assam Provincial Assembly. Nehru assured him that an
Advisory Committee elected by the Constituent Assembly comprising the tribal representatives would meet the tribals of the Naga hills and would sympathetically consider the issue. Nehru also hinted in his letter about the opening of a special department both at the Centre and in the provinces which would look after the welfare and the interests of the tribal areas. He further assured Sakhrie that all steps would be taken to safeguard the rights, customs and religious beliefs of the Nagas. He made it clear that there would not be any interference in their social, cultural and religious beliefs. The Nagas would be given opportunity to participate in the administration of the country. He wrote that all possible help would be given for all round development of the Naga people. Nehru's constructive approach, however, could not break the ice and the Nagas continued their agitations for an interim government. The British Government also was unable to entertain the demand of the Nagas. This was evident from the fact that all the representations of the Nagas to His Majesty's Government in this connection remained unattended. Though a few British officials in the Naga Hills had earlier suggested to convert this tribal area as a 'Crown Colony' or Trust Territory, the Labour Government in England was not in a mood to open this complicated political issue at the time of their withdrawal.
from India. Hence they simply kept silent on the representations of the Nagas. However, when Walter Smiles, a member of the then British Parliament, asked about the fate of the Nagas' demand for an interim Government on the floor of the House of Commons, the Prime Minister, Attlee, replied evasively, saying that the Nagas should put their demand before the Advisory Committee of India which was currently seized with the matter.

It thus appears that the British policy was to tell the Nagas to get their problems redressed by the Indian leaders who were soon to become the political masters of India. The efforts of Andrew Clow, the Governor of Assam, were also directed to this end. He tried to make the Naga leaders understand the futility of their demand for a separate State. He told the Nagas in February 1947, that a separate State or even a separate Province for them was not a practical proposition. If they insisted on to get, they would always remain poor and backward and would loose some of the inadequate services they were enjoying at that time. He therefore advised the Nagas to have an understanding with the people of Assam and to live within the Indian Union.

Sir Akbar Hydari And Nagas: 10 Year Agreement

The same advice of Andrew Clow, Governor of Assam,
was also, however not liked by many Naga leaders who insisted on the grant of an interim Government. And even some extremists demanded complete political independence for the Nagas. At this juncture Sir Akbar Hydari, the new Governor of Assam, was instructed by the Government of India in June, 1947, to meet the Naga leaders and if possible to conclude an agreement with them regarding the status of the Naga Hills district. Sir Akbar Hydari, therefore, reached Kohima on 26 June, 1947. He was warmly received by the Naga National Council. In his welcome speech, Mr. Sakhrie, the Joint Secretary of the Naga National Council, observed that the Naga Hills should be restored to the Nagas and it should be inalienable. No attempt should be made to transfer any portion of the Naga Hills to non-Nagas. Mr. Sakhrie mentioned to Akbar Hydari that a Constitution of India drawn by the people who had no knowledge of Nagaland and its people would be quite wrong, injustice, illegal, unconstitutional and therefore, unsuitable and naturally unacceptable to the Nagas. He therefore, asserted that the Nagas had the right of self-determination and demanded the setting of an interim Government for a period of 10 (ten) years so as to enable the Nagas to make a responsible choice at the end of the 10 (ten) years period.
After listening to the views of the Naga National Council, Akbar Hydari, had discussions with the Naga leaders. He assured them that the successor Indian Government had no sinister designs and that the Naga people would be treated on an equal footing with the other Indians. All efforts would be made to protect the Nagas from being exploited and at the same time they would have every opportunity to develop according to their own particular way of life. The Naga area would have full autonomy within the Indian Union. It appears that the policy of the interim of the Government of India, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was to allow the Nagas the maximum autonomy, consistent with the security of India's North East Frontier. 22

In the light of the discussions held at Kohima between the Nagas and Akbar Hydari at last the 9 (nine) point agreement was reached in June, 1947, which came to be known as the Hydary Agreement. 23 The preamble of the agreement provided the Nagas the "right to develop themselves according to their truly expressed wishes. Articles, from 1 to 8th points dealt with the followings, namely, judicial, executive, legislative, land, taxation, boundaries, arms act and regulation; all within the confine of the interest of both the truly accepted terms and conditions. And yet - the 9th (ninth) Article of
The 9 (nine) point agreement was the main issue for the concerned parties. The first two articles of the agreement were related to judicial and executive matters. All civil cases and criminal as well, arising between the Nagas would be disposed of by the duly constituted Naga Courts in accordance with the Naga Customary Laws as would be introduced with the consent of the duly recognised Naga Representative Organisation. In case of life imprisonment or death sentences, the person concerned would have the right to appeal to the Governor. In respect of executive matters the general principle was laid, according to which what the Naga National Council is prepared to pay for, the Naga National Council should control. This principle will apply equally to the work done as well as the staff employed. The Governor of Assam was given discretionary power to appoint the district officers for Nagaland. The most important provision was that no law passed by the Provincial or Central Legislature which would materially affect the terms of this agreement or the religious practices of the Nagas, would have legal force in the Naga Hills, without the consent of the Naga National Council.

The Naga National Council was empowered to impose, collect and spend the land revenues and house taxes. The Nagas were assured that there would not be alienation
to a non-Naga without the consent of the Naga National Council. The last provision which came to be known as the 9th point, run as follows - "The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 (ten) years to ensure the due observance of this agreement; at the end of the period the Naga National Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of the Naga peoples would be arrived at.24

Unanimity over these articles was almost reached but when the question of interpretation of the 9th (ninth) point came up, the trouble/uprising started before the expiry of the term of agreement. Akbar Hydari and Nehru who had accepted the agreement obviously intended that at the end of the 10 (ten) years the Nagas would be free to suggest if they so desired, change in the administrative pattern to suit their special character and to ensure a greater measure of autonomy within the Indian Constitution which was yet still to be framed.25 The Constitution was to formalise the Naga demands in this agreement and they would, therefore, themselves decide whether they would join the plain district of Assam, or, other adjoining areas, such as Manipur, or, would like to have a separate state of their own within
Indian Union. But, some of the extremists Nagas led by A.Z. Phizo, President of the Naga National Council, however, interpreted this 9th (ninth) article in their own way. According to them this article meant that they would be free and have the liberty to demand complete political independence from India after the expiry of the ten years. Thus a controversy was raised over the interpretation of the ninth article of the Naga-Hydari agreement of 1947. In fact there, two sections among the Nagas or three to be precise the Naga public or the mass, the moderates and the extremists. The Naga general public or the mass had no knowledge at all of the prevailing Naga political turmoil to a great extent. The so-called elite groups of the moderates and the extremists were the main players of the Naga politics. The moderates interpreted the agreement in a correct perspective to a great extent but totally. They said that almost all their demands had been fulfilled within the agreement. Aliba Imti, another Joint Secretary of the Naga National Council went as far as to say that the foundation stone of our cherished goal is already laid down. Let the spirit of differences, if there be any, be taken away from your hearts, come forward with an unified spirit. Let us build a new Nagaland based on the spirit of goodwill and understanding. Let us remember a proverb -
'Rome was not built in a Day' and let us remember that 'United we stand, divided we fall'. 

The extremists were however, adamant and they wanted the assurance of the Indian Government for complete independence after the expiry of ten years. The provision of the agreement, therefore, were put to vote in the Naga National Council and the majority accepted them. The extremists who were in minority were outvoted and consequently, they remained dissatisfied. Their dissatisfaction prevented the Nagas from coming to a definite understanding with the interim government of India. The Indian leaders also were not prepared to risk the safety and security of India's Himalayan borders by allowing these hill people to remain independent of India. Naturally, when there was no meeting point the agreement could not be implemented and thus it remained a 'Dead Letter'.

The British Government was in haste, on the other hand, to grant independence to India. Consequently, India became independent on 15 August, 1947. Thus India being a successor State which inherited all such territories which formed the part of British India earlier except those which were earmarked for Pakistan. The Naga hill areas, therefore, also became an integral part of independent India.
Since the Naga-Hydari agreement could not be implemented because of the misunderstanding of the extremists, the Naga issue remained where it had been. But the Indian leaders were keen to accommodate the demands of the Nagas as far as possible within the framework of the Constitution of India which was being drafted by the Constituent Assembly. And thus naturally it takes time for Nagas problem. This Constituent Assembly had been constituted in November 1946, to arrange for the transfer of power from the British Parliament to India and to make a Constitution of India. The Constituent Assembly set up an Advisory Committee on Tribal Areas under the chairmanship of Sardar Vallabhai Patel to consider the problems of Assam as well as of the tribal people. This Advisory Committee again set up a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi, the Chief Minister of Assam, to assess and advice on the future administration of the tribal and excluded areas inhabited by the tribal hill peoples of Assam. Bordoloi started the work immediately. He not only toured the North Eastern Tribal areas extensively to assess the situation personally, but also associated a few of the Naga leaders in his Committee in order to know the views of the Nagas. During his talks he assessed that the Naga leaders wanted
a separate State of their own under the guardianship of India for ten years. And after the expiry of ten years they wanted to be free to decide their own future.

Bordoloi was however not convinced with the demand of the Nagas. G. Bordoloi tried to impress upon the members of the Naga National Council the utility of the Naga Hills area remaining a part of India. But the question was how the tribal people would be integrated in the Indian system. Taking into account the views of the Naga leaders and the political and security requirement of India Bordoloi evolved a middle path. In his report he recommended, "All the tribes of other Provinces than Assam whether living in the plains or in the partially excluded tracts, should as a whole be treated as minority. As regards to Assam, conditions in the Hill districts of which the Naga hills, the Lushai hills and the North Cachar hills have been excluded are on a totally different footing and the atmosphere, partially in the excluded areas, is one of which is not to be found elsewhere. These areas must therefore be treated separately from the rest. The Committee laid down a number of provisions in its first report for the tribal and excluded areas of Assam. On the basis of these recommendations the founding fathers on the Indian Constitution placed all the tribal areas including the Naga hills district in Article 244 of the Constitution of India which made
the provision for the fifth and sixth schedules of the Constitution of India. While the fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution lays down a number of provisions for the administration and control of the scheduled areas and scheduled tribes other than the State of Assam, the sixth schedule makes provision for the administration of tribal areas of Assam.

**Provision of the Constitution of India for the Naga Hills**

The sixth provision of the Indian Constitution enumerated in detail the administrative set up of all the hill districts of Assam. The schedule was divided into two parts. While Part-A dealt with the 'Excluded Areas' of the hill districts of Assam such as United Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Lushai Hills and the Naga Hills. Whereas the Part-B dealt with the North Eastern Frontier including Balipara Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract, Abor Hill District and the Naga Tribal area.

The Constitution of India made the hill districts which were placed under the Part-A, autonomous with District Councils for their respective areas comprising not more than twenty-four members. Thus the Hill districts were made autonomous with a view to protecting the culture, religion and economic interests of the hill people. The composition of the District Council was
based on the democratic principles laid down in the Constitution of India. Three fourths \((3/4)\) of the members of the District Council were to be elected on the basis of the adult franchise. The tribal areas which had been placed under Part-B of the sixth schedule were declared as autonomous regions and separate regional Councils were constituted for them. The members of the regional Councils were also elected on the democratic principles. The Governor was empowered to make rules for the constitution of the District Councils and the Regional Councils in consultation with existing Tribal Councils or other representative Tribal organisations within the autonomous districts or regions concerned. The District Councils or Regional Councils were granted power to make rules for the composition of subordinate local councils or boards, the appointment of officers and staff of the District Councils and Regional Councils, the procedure of conduct of business in the district and regional councils, and the term and conditions for election of the district councils and regional councils and qualifications of their members. Further these councils were given the authority to regulate agriculture, the allotment of occupation of land other than reserved forests, cottage industries, the management of forests, the use of any canal or water course for agricultural purposes and the establishment of village or town committees or
councils and their powers. They were also given power to manage affairs concerning elections of the civil chiefs or village headmen. For the welfare of the people and the growth of the hill areas, the District and regional councils were given enormous powers in matters such as inheritance of property, marriage laws and social customs, maintenance of trade and education, construction of roads, bridges, hospitals, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds etc. The District Councils and Regional Councils were empowered to impose and collect taxes and to make necessary expenditure.35

The autonomous hill districts were given representation in the State Legislature of Assam where some of the Hill representatives were even appointed as Ministers and Deputy Ministers for the affairs of the Hill people in Assam Government. The autonomous districts were given representation in the Assam Government and the Legislature of Assam had no power to interfere in the local affairs of these autonomous districts or regions. The sixth schedule provided that no act of State Legislature in respect of the tribal affairs should apply to any autonomous districts unless the District Councils so direct.36

Thus the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution provided autonomy for the tribal areas of Assam in their
local matters. But for their supervision, control and direction of the District and Regional Councils the Governor of Assam was given some discretionary powers. It was provided that the Governor may by public notification direct that any act of the Parliament or of the Legislature of the State shall not apply to an autonomous district or shall apply to such district, or any part thereof subject to such exception or modifications as he may specify in the notification. The Governor was entrusted with authority to appoint a Commission at any time to examine and report on any matter specified by him relating to the administration of the autonomous districts and autonomous regions. Further the Governor was empowered to annul and suspend an act or resolution of the District Council or Regional Council if, in the opinion of the Governor, such an act would endanger the safety of India. The Governor had power to dissolve the District Councils and the Regional Councils on the report of the Commission appointed by him. He might direct for fresh elections for the reconstruction of the Councils or he might take the administration of the area under the authority of such Councils himself or place the administration of such area under the Commission appointed by him for a period not exceeding twelve months.37
The Constitution also made certain provisions for the welfare of the tribal people all over India. According to Article 275 of the Constitution of India, the special fund can be available from the consolidated fund of India, for the development of the tribal areas of Assam. Part-XVI of the Constitution provided for the representation of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for the members of the Scheduled Tribes. Article 335 provides that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Tribes shall be taken into consideration consistent with the maintenance of efficiency of administration in appointments to Central and State services. Article 338 of the Constitution empowers the President of India to appoint a Special Officer to investigate the working of safeguards which are made to protect the interests of the Tribes. Article 339 also empowers the President to appoint a Commission after expiry of ten years from the commencement of the constitution to report on the administration of the scheduled areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes.

It is thus obvious that the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution made the hill districts and tribal areas of Assam autonomous on the basis of the recommendation of the Bordoloi Committee which had suggested a middle course for the hill areas of Assam.
The sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution made such provisions which partially met the Naga demands to manage those affairs which concerned them. In a way the Naga demand of autonomy in cultural, religious and economic matters were met. In this connection we find a reflection of the policy enumerated by the Indian leaders after independence. The policy was to provide autonomy and freedom in local matters to different regions of India and at the same time to maintain the unity and integrity of the country. The sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution was definitely based on this very principle. The Nagas were given the district council and regional council and representation in the Government of Assam. This indicates that the Nagas were given autonomy in matters of local administration. The Naga hills area was, however, kept within the Indian Union. Thus the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution had expected that the creation of the District Council and the Regional Council would give the Nagas a sense of participation in the administration and they would gradually come within the mainstream of India.

These expectations of the Indian leaders, however, were not based on a realistic assessment of the situation obtaining in the Naga hills at that time. The Nagas far from being satisfied with the provision of the Indian
Constitution, became all the more irritated and dissatisfied. The Nagas had been demanding a Government of their own, of course within the Indian Union for the time being but contrary to their expectations they were tagged together with Assam which they had consistently opposed. They felt that they had been betrayed. Even the provision of the Naga-Hydari Agreement of June, 1947, which had provided some form of an interim Government for the Naga hills area also could not be made available to them. Therefore the extremist Nagas had all along advocated for an independent sovereign State of Nagland. However, the moderates were prepared to cooperate with the Indian Government, had the Constitution provided them a separate Government of their own within the Indian Union as stated in the Naga-Hydari Agreement. But now they also felt that they had been let down by the Government of India. The dissatisfaction of the moderates provided an opportunity to the extremists to create an anti-Indian feeling throughout the Naga hills. This resulted in the boycott of the elections of the district councils of the Naga hills district and the general election of 1952. This was a surprise that both the moderates and the extremists were not in the election fray though even the moderates were on the side of the Government of India as stated earlier for their opinion to work within the framework of the Constitution of
India. Hence it may be stated that the moderates were betrayal to the Constitution of India.

Here a pertinent question may arise as to why the constitutional provision concerning the Naga hills area fell short of the expectations of the Naga people. Two reasons may be attributed. Firstly, the Indian leaders at that time were too involved with the Kashmir problem to look after other issues. The Government devoted its entire energy and attention to the problems created by Pakistan's invasion on Kashmir and the influx of tortured and harassed Hindu refugees who had been pushed out of Pakistan at that time. Consequently the problem of this remote Naga hills area did not attract sufficient attention. H.N. Kunjru, the Veteran Member of Parliament also held the view that they would not look to other problems as long as they had Kashmir on their head. Secondly, the inadequate publicity of what the Government had done for the Nagas was also responsible for a feeling of dissatisfaction. There is no denying the fact that the Indian Constitution provided many facilities to the Nagas and other hill people, and also ensured the protection of their economic, cultural and religious rights. The district council had already been created and the Nagas were given the power to manage their local affairs. But due to lack
of proper publicity these facts could not be brought to the notice of the majority of the illiterate Nagas and so the case of the Indian Government went by default. The selfish and over-ambitious extremist Nagas, therefore, succeeded in creating a feeling among the Naga people that the Indian Government was out to subjugate and exploit them. This anti-Indian feeling was deliberately allowed to grow. It ultimately culminated in hostility against India and Naga underground activities were started.

Zapu Phizo

The champion of the cause of Naga independence movement and hostile activities was Zapu Phizo. Nothing definite is known about his early life but on enquiry it was learnt that he belonged to the Gwizantsu Clan and was born in Khonoma Village of the Angami Naga Tribe which was known for its militancy. He studied only upto class ten at Shillong and thereafter went to Burma in 1933, in search of some business. There he did insurance business and at one stage, in 1943, during the great World War II, he joined the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) of Subhash Chandra Bose in collaboration with the Japanese against the British at Burma War Theatre front and reached even upto Kohima where the Japanese were defeated. When Burma was recaptured by
the British towards the end of the Second World War, he was arrested but released in 1946 and came to his native land, Nagaland. At that time the Indian political scene was in a melting pot and so Phizo tried to fish in the troubled political waters. He plunged himself into politics and advocated the cause of separation of the Naga Hills area from India. His entry into politics and his struggle for Nagaland's independence were not born out of any deep conviction or any consideration for the genuine welfare of his fellowmen, but because of some misguided notions and selfish considerations.

This is evident from the fact that while the majority of the Naga leaders wanted to adopt a conciliatory approach and expressed their willingness to live within the Indian Union for the sake of peace and prosperity in Nagaland, Phizo preached violence and hostility since peaceful method could not adopt to achieve his independent goal.

The constitutional arrangements for the Naga hills area enshrined in the sixth schedule were made the target of attack by Phizo and his fellow extremists. He told the Nagas that they would not have peace and prosperity, if they continued to be part of the Indian Union. In the meantime Phizo got an opportunity to become the President of the Naga National Council and elected as
President in December 1950 (as Phizo told me in London in July 1985). To further his needs he took the (extreme) step of holding a plebiscite of his own in the Naga hills area on the issue of Nagaland's independence. He conducted the plebiscite in May 1951. (Scato Swu, former underground leader and former member of Parliament of the Rajya Sabha also took part in the plebiscite as he told me during my interviews with him in 1984 in South Avenue, New Delhi). However, this plebiscite was nothing but a political hoax. It had no legal basis nor was it properly conducted. There was no ballot paper and no arrangement for voting. The Naga people were simply asked whether they wanted independence or slavery. So the issue was not stated in the correct political perspective.

Phizo planned to have approached all the Naga inhabitants but on personal inquiry and survey it was learnt that the 'Thumb Impressions' of only male Nagas were obtained on a piece of paper (and that too after coercion and terrorisation to a certain degree). The views of the female Nagas were definitely not obtained. Moreover, Phizo's claim of approaching all the Nagas on this issue appears to be illogical because in 1951, communications in Nagaland were grossly inadequate. Hence it is to say that a plebiscite was conducted throughout the Naga hills in 1951, is far from truthful democratic norms of the Naga society. It is a matter of surprise in an extra-
ordinary way as to how Phizo could conduct the unilateral plebiscite. In fact, Phizo did it without the knowledge and the permission of the Indian Government. Immediately after the plebiscite, Phizo sent a communication to the Government claiming that 99 per cent of the Naga people had voted for the independence of Nagaland. The Government of India, however, did not take any serious note of it as it was not only mischievous but also a highly illegal, ill-conceived and unconstitutional measure.

When the plebiscite attempt failed to produce the desired result, Phizo made another bid to assert his old demand of independence for the Naga hills. He met Pandit Nehru at Gauhati in December 1951. Phizo requested Nehru to grant the Nagas independence which was their birth right. Nehru while rejecting Phizo's demand for Nagas independence, said that his was an assured demand and it was harmful not only to the Nagas but also to the whole of India.

Phizo having failed to achieve his objectives, now decided to resort to direct action. He therefore, firstly started the non-cooperation movement. He induced the Nagas to boycott the general elections held in 1952 (the First General Election of India). Consequently, no Naga representative was elected either to the autonomous District Council of the Naga Hills or
to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the Indian Parliament. Phizo also incited the people not to cooperate with the Government of India with a view to paralysing the administration of Nagaland. He exhorted them to give up Government jobs and to boycott all public institutions. He forbade the Nagas to pay taxes and harass all those who sided with the Government.

The Clash Between Naga Underground And Indian Armed Forces

The anti-national activities of Phizo and his followers disturbed the peace of the Naga hills, no doubt, but that made the Government think seriously about the activities of Phizo. In fact the non-cooperation movement started by Phizo did not create much impact on the administration at that time but it was realised that the situation might go beyond control in future. Hence, the Government of India, decided that the trouble should be nipped in the bud. Therefore, the Government decided to adopt, on the one hand the policy of arm-twisting and on the other the policy of persuasion. This is evident from the statement of Nehru who said in the Lok Sabha on 23 August 1956, that "we issued strict instructions and directions to the effect that we must win over the people and seek their tribal cooperation". Nehru further said that the force had been sent to the Naga
hills with a view to protecting the life and properties of the people and not to harass and kill them. Nehru said, "We received appeals from the villagers and from the Government employees, teachers and others. Was it not our duty to give them protection?" Consequently, the Government put a number of restrictions on the activities of the Naga National Council. The Council was asked not to hold meetings and conventions without prior permission of the Government. A strict watch was kept on the activities of the members of the Naga National Council. Since Phizo was the ring leader of the anti-national activities, the Indian Government issued a warrant of arrest against him. To avoid arrest Phizo escaped to Burma but there he was caught and sent back to India. Bishnuram Medhi, Chief Minister of Assam, made it clear that the demand for an independent sovereign Naga State raised by a handful of Nagas could not be entertained.

In early 1954, Medhi again declared "the people of the Naga hills want jobs, schools, dispensaries, new roads etc. and as a matter of fact we have taken schemes for affording better medical and other facilities .... The Nagas in Burma have accepted the Burmese Constitution, the Nagas in Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills etc. do not want independence; the Nagas in N.E.F.A. also do not want independence. Why do this handful of persons want independent Nagaland? The Nagas as I have stated are in
the Indian Republic". This was a sufficient hint to the Naga extremists that the Indian Government would deal with the situation in firm hand.

A number of officials and goodwill missions were sent to the Naga hills area for that very purpose. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Health Minister of India, made an extensive tour of the north eastern region and held talks with a number of Naga leaders in November 1953. A Naga delegation also met her at Imphal, Manipur, and once again repeated the demand of independence of the Naga hills. Rajkumari Kaur tried to impress upon the Naga delegation that their demand was untenable. She urged the members of the delegation to join hands with the Government in the reconstruction of the Naga hills. Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the President of the Assam Pradesh Congress, also visited the Naga hills twice in 1953 and met the Naga people. He assured them that if there were any shortcomings in the Constitution, they might be removed through amendments. The crux of the whole matter was the security of the Naga hills and the Indian border, and the prosperity and well-being of the Naga people. Separation of the Naga hills from the Indian Union would not solve their economic problems. He, therefore, made a passionate appeal to the Naga people to reconsider the whole thing in a proper perspective.
and suggest possible ways and means for the solution of the Naga problem. In 1953, Nehru went to the Naga hills along with the Burmese Prime Minister, Thakin U Nu, to seek cooperation of the Nagas. G.B. Mavalankar, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha visited the Naga hills area in January, 1954 and suggested to the Nagas to develop a mutual understanding and cordial relations with other people of India.

Thus the Indian leaders continued their efforts to make the Naga people understand and futility of their demand; and the importance of maintaining the unity of the country. But the extremist Nagas under the influence of Phizo could not see things in a wider perspective and so they remained confined to the four-walls of agitation and hostility. This is evident from the fact that Phizo stepped up his hostile activities and set up an underground Naga Government in the Tuensang area in September 1953. He termed it "Khunak Kautang Ngeukhum" which means 'Peoples Sovereign Republic' of free Nagaland. And Phizo's Lieutenant Honking was made the Head of the State with fifteen Kilonser (ministers) under him. Phizo appointed Thongdi Chang (an ex-military officer of Indian army) as the Commander-in-Chief and Imti Chuba, as the Ahng (Governor) of his self-styled Government.
With the help of Thongdi Chang, Phizo organised armed gangs in the Tuensang area. The most unfortunate thing, however, was that he took assistance from neighbouring countries (like Pakistan, China, Burma, etc.) which not only bore animosity towards India but were also jealous of India's progress and prosperity at that time. The arms used by them in those days consisted of arms captured in raids on police stations and outposts of Indian security forces, arms seized from private citizens, arms and ammunitions left behind in large quantities in the Naga Hills (Kohima) after the Second World War as both the Japanese and British forces fought seriously, fiercely at Kohima during the war. Thus the self-styled Phizo's Government equipped with arms and ammunitions and having all support from China and Pakistan went on murdering, looting and threatening the innocent Nagas and the Government officials throughout the Naga hills and Tuensang area. Phizo created fear and terror among the people by giving warning through letters and pamphlets. Many people including Government servants were kidnapped and tortured. The underground Nagas damaged roads to disrupt communications. The villagers who objected to the hostile activities were badly harassed, oppressed and even murdered. An enquiry from local people (Gawn Buras) (village Headmen), public leaders and Government servants who were deployed in the Naga hills at that
time revealed that the people in the Naga hills lived in constant terror and fear from 1953 to 1955. It is said that the general public was so upset and afraid of the hostiles that they hardly dared to go out. Phizo might have thought that terror and fear would compel the Indian Government to quit the Naga hills. But Phizo's assumption was wrong. The Government was not to be cowed down by such terror tactics of the hostile Nagas who were very much lower in military strategy compared to the Indian armed forces who constitute the fourth largest army in the world. It had waited patiently for a considerable time in the hope that sanity and good sense could prevail upon the Naga leaders and that they would desist from violent activities. But Phizo and his followers were as if, bent upon creating trouble in the Naga hills. Hence, the Indian Government had to take stern action against the rebels. The Government of Assam was instructed to deal with the situation with strong hands. The Assam Government ordered for the abolition of the Tribal Councils and clamped 144 Section in Kohima area which banned assembly of more than five (5) persons. An additional police force was also posted at Lungkham village of Mokokchung sub-division to maintain law and order. The tightening of security measures provoked the rebel Nagas to retaliate. They attacked the Assam Rifles and a loyal Naga village in
March 1955. The rebels burnt down sixty Naga houses and their granaries. The Assam Rifles retaliated by burning the strongholds of the rebels in that area which was declared disturbed area on 20 July, 1955.54

While underground activities were seriously going on in the middle of 1955, some Nagas who were overground denied their hands in the very disturbances and requested the Government to maintain law and order for peace. A Naga delegation met the Assam Chief Minister, Bishnuram Medhi, at Shillong on 15 August 1955 and signed a declaration which condemned violence and terrorism and promised to use peaceful methods for the redress of their grievances.55 It appears that at this juncture the Naga National Council was passing through a period of internal dissension. Mr. T. Sakhrie, Jasokie, T.N. Angami and others had become disillusioned with Phizo's leadership. They wanted peaceful solution to the Naga problem. Hence they sent their representatives to wait upon the Assam Chief Minister in October, 1955, and to impress upon him that they wanted peace. These moderate Nagas now wanted to capture the Naga National Council, which was at that time in the grip of Phizo, the President of the Naga National Council. Thus towards the end of 1955, there was definitely a parting of ways between the moderates and the Phizoists (extre-
mists). This infighting in the Naga National Council compelled Phizo to go underground and to continue the struggle for the independence of the Nagas. Mr. T. Sakhrie, Phizo's own cousin, who had sided with the moderates was kidnapped and murdered brutally in January 1956, with a view to striking terror in the hearts of the moderates. Phizo and his followers further stepped up rebel activities and a reign of terror was let loose in the beginning of 1956. On 22 March, 1956, the underground Nagas declared the establishment of a Federal Government of Nagaland at Phensinyu village in Kohima area. And a Constitution was drafted which declared Nagaland's peoples' sovereign Republic. There would be a Parliament (Hoho) with a strength of 100 (hundred) Members (Tatars). The President would be elected by the people and his Cabinet would consist of fifteen ministers (Kilonsers). Nagaland would maintain permanent military neutrality.

Since the peace loving Nagas and the moderates were not with Phizo, he had to fight on two fronts. One was the Indian Government and the military deployed in the Naga hills and the other was the loyal and moderate Nagas. Phizo's followers raided not only the military establishments but also looted and killed their own kith and kin who were peace loving and loyal to the
Indian Government. Phizo’s hostile activities spread all over the Naga hills and by the middle of 1956, the situation went from bad to worse. Thus with the advent of 1956, the underground activities of Phizo and his followers became so obnoxious that the Indian Government was compelled to take stern action against them. Even during this period many civilian lives were lost in the hands of the underground Nagas as those peace loving Nagas from Mao-Naga-areas who preached the news of peace were put to death. The Assam Government was instructed to take necessary steps to curb the hostile activities. Consequently, the Naga Hills district Ordinance and Assam Maintenance of Public Order were promulgated by the Government of Assam and these came into force in April, 1956.58 The Indian armed forces were deployed in the Naga hills. A special power Act was also enforced in the Naga hills in order to maintain law and order and to stop violence and bloodshed. Thus the battle line was drawn between the Government and the underground Nagas. Indian troops carried out a number of operations against the strongholds of the rebels in the Tuensang area. Many rebel Nagas were killed and some of them were captured. The so-called Naga Federal Government established by Phizo was declared illegal. A warrant was issued for the arrest of the underground leader, Mr. Zapu
Phizo on charge of rioting, trespassing, treason, abduction and his complicity in Sakhrie's murder.\textsuperscript{59} But Phizo managed to escape from Nagaland and he went to England on 10 June 1960 (as he also told me during my interviews with him in London, during my field study trip to London in June-September 1985).

It is also true that many Indian troops and military personnels were also killed in encounters/in action with the Naga underground army but the worst sufferers were the Nagas themselves. All the developmental works had come to a standstill because of the disturbances caused by Naga underground. Life and property in the Naga hills area had become very insecure. Phizo's activities had no doubt, compelled the Indian government to take strong steps to suppress the insurgency, but the Nagas were always treated as Indian citizens. Strict instructions had been given to the army not to resort to much force and coercion. The instructions were as follows - "You must remember that all the people of the area in which you are operating are fellow Indians. They may have a different religion, they may pursue a different way of life but they are Indians. You must, therefore, make every possible effort to win their confidence and respect and to help them feel that they belong to India".\textsuperscript{60} \textit{This is not true.}
Phizo and his followers were to a great extent to be blamed for this state of affairs. They had killed, T. Sakhrie, the Secretary of the outlawed, Naga National Council, and many of their associates. (They had also tortured many of their kith and kin simply because they opposed violence and underground activities. Phizo's only aim was to secure Naga Independence and for this purpose he allowed his men to commit atrocities. In a way Phizo applied machiavellian means of achieving his goal. To conceal all these, Phizo accused the Indian troops/army operating in the Naga hills of committing atrocities, murder, rape and other heinous crimes.

A careful scrutiny of the facts, however, tells a different tale. The Indian army acted with a considerable restraint though it had to work under very trying conditions. It is possible that during the fight/encounters with the rebels some of the Nagas might have been harassed but this was an unavoidable in the given situation of armed operations. Indian military helped the Nagas in all respects and earned their sympathy and goodwill.) This is evident from the statement of Rev. Kenneth Kerhuo, the Field Director of the Angami Baptist Mission (Rev. Kenneth Kerhuo along with some delegation met Phizo in London in 1977 for Peace Mission). Rev. Kerhuo remarked; "Owing to the violent activities of the Naga Home Guards, most of the Churches stopped
functioning in the Naga Hills some time ago. The villagers were so terror stricken that they could not come out of their own homes. How would then, they could come to Churches? I have heard nothing but the highest praise of the army officers and men in general from several Nagas of different tribes. Thus the exit of Phizo from Nagaland and the military action against the hostiles somewhat eased the situation. No doubt the hostiles could not be eliminated completely but they had been subdued to some extent for the time being. With the departure of Phizo, from Nagaland and most of his associates going underground, the moderate Nagas got an opportunity to capture the Naga National Council in the middle of 1956 onwards. By this time these moderates had come to realise that the solution lay in mutual understanding and negotiations not in violence and hostility against India. Hence they explicitly condemned the violent hostile activities of the underground Nagas.

To this end they organised a delegation of six Naga leaders to wait upon Jawaharlal Nehru in September, 1956, in New Delhi, where a free and frank discussion was held. Pandit Nehru frankly told the members of the delegation that the Nagas were independent because they were part of Independent, Sovereign and Democratic India. Nehru further assured them that the Indian government was
prepared to give them maximum autonomy within the Indian Union. But before effecting any change in the Constitution and administrative set-up of Nagaland, peace and order must be restored there and the hostile should cease their unlawful activities. Pandit Nehru's assurances had a deep impact on the Naga leaders and they went back to the Naga hills with determination to persuade the Naga underground to give up the path of war and violence and to accept a negotiated settlement of the Naga problem within the Indian Union. An illustrious Naga leader, T.N. Angami, disowned Phizo's group in the beginning of 1957 and joined the moderates. He made a Reforming Committee of the Naga National Council in February, 1957, with a view to accelerate the process of negotiated settlement with the Government of India. This committee, while outlining its aims and objectives said that it was opposed to the methods of violence. It expressed its commitment to help restore peace, order and security in Nagaland. It also laid down the objectives of winning over the hostiles treading the path of violence. The Reforming Committee said in unequivocal terms - "It stands by the Prime Minister's assurance that when peace is restored administrative changes would be introduced in the Naga hills in full consultation with the Naga people of all tribes ...."
It also claims for the Nagas their rightful share of India's independence and is convinced that the majority desire of the Nagas is for a separate administrative unit in keeping with the Naga tradition within the Union of India.

Therefore it was a clear indication that the moderate Naga leaders were prepared to settle the problem of the Naga within the framework of the Constitution of India, but they wanted an administrative unit of their own which must be a separate one from and independent of Assam. This demand narrowed down the gulf between the Naga demand and the stand taken by the government. Therefore, the Nagas had agreed to find a solution of their problem within the framework of the Constitution of India and the government also consented to introduce the necessary administrative changes in the Naga hills in order to satisfy the utmost desire of the Naga people.64

Therefore, now the stage was set for constitutional and administrative changes in Nagaland which ultimately resulted in the creation of the State of Nagaland, a constituent State of the Indian Union and separate of Assam.
Notes and References


2A Ibid.

3 The Naga Nation (a monthly magazine published by the Naga Club), February, 1930, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 3-8.

4 Verrier Elwin appears to be near the truth when he says that at the time of the Simon Commission there was "no talk of separation of Naga hills from India". Elwin, Nagaland, op. cit., p. 51; see also, Constituent Assembly Debates, op. cit., pp. 132-33.


11 Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 22 May, 1947.


14 R.K. Ramdhayani, the Secretary of the Subcommittee of the Constituent Assembly, who went to the Naga hills wrote: "At the time of the visit of the committee we have come across reports and copies
of letters purporting to have been written to well
known English Conservative leaders and then Prime
Minister of the United Kingdom regarding the Naga
case. It had also been reported that the British
officers had thought of separating the tribal area
from the rest of India declaring them a separate
dominion, if not a separate State under the protection
of the British Government". Current Events, Delhi,
May, 1958, p. 33.

15 Y.D. Gundevia, War and Peace in Nagaland,
Delhi, 1975, pp. 56-57.

16 Mayangnokcha Alenchiba, A Brief Historical Account

17 Reginald Coupland, The Future of India, London,
1943, pp. 164-65; see also, D.R. Mankekar,


19 V.V. Rao, A Century of Tribal Politics in North
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20 Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 27 June, 1947.

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21A Ibid.

22 Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches, Vol. II, Third Impression,
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23 Text of the Nine-point Hydari-Naga Agreement;
D.R. Mankekar, On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland,

24 Ibid.

25 Mankekar, On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland,
op. cit., p. 40.

26 The Naga Nation, Vol. I, No. II, June 1947,
op. cit., p. 5.

26A Ibid.


Constitution of India, sixth schedule, paragraph 2(1), op. cit., p. 128.

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Ibid., sixth schedule, para 12(a), op. cit., p. 133.

Ibid., para 16(a)(b), op. cit., p. 135.

Constitution of India, Article 275, op. cit., p. 76.


Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 23 June, 1948.


Based on personal interviews with Naga Elders.

43B Based on a number of interviews with Naga Elders, villagers and retired government servants who were serving in Nagaland at that time. (Also based on my personal interviews with Phizo in London, during my field trip to London, U.K. in June-September, 1985).


45 *Assam Tribune*, Gauhati, 20 May 1952.


46A Ibid.


47A Ibid., p. 47.

47B Alenchibha, *Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, op. cit., pp. 175-76.

47C Ibid.


49 *Statesman*, Delhi, 1 December 1953; see also, Hokishe, *Emergence of Nagaland*, New Delhi, 1986, p. 72-F.


51A Ibid.


55 Assam Tribune, Gauhati, 16 August, 1955.
56 The Times of India, New Delhi, 16 January 1956.
59 Asian Recorder, April 7-13, 1956, pp. 772-73.
60 Manekar, On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland, op. cit., pp. 53-54.